

MESSAGE THOUGHTS

“The Returned Exiles Return to the Lord” (slide)

Reality. Repentance. Rejoicing. Revival. (Slide)

MAIN IDEA

The calling of the Lord leads us to pioneering His work, and hearing the word of the Lord leads to the repenting and rejoicing in the Lord. (Slide)

NEHEMIAH 7 – Return of the Exiles (Slide)

Walls remade. Repopulate city. Opportunities given.

QUESTIONS (slide)

Why do we fight for a cause?

Why would we advocate to fight for a cause?

Would you want to lead the cause or follow the cause?

Kony 2012 is a 30-minute short documentary film and viral social media campaign released on March 5, 2012, by the nonprofit [Invisible Children, Inc.](#). Its goal was to make Ugandan warlord and International Criminal Court fugitive Joseph Kony famous to secure his arrest by the end of the year. [1, 2]

- Viral Spread: The video hit over 100 million views within six days, becoming one of the most viral internet campaigns in history.
- Fundraising: The campaign raised roughly \$20 million to \$28 million to expand regional awareness, programs, and community protection in Central Africa.
- Real-World Action: It prompted U.S. and international political commitments, humanitarian aid, and support for regional task forces targeting the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

Criticisms and Controversies

- Oversimplification: Critics argued the film reduced a complex, multi-decade geopolitical conflict into a simplistic "good vs. evil" narrative. [1, 2]
- Outdated Information: Kony and the LRA had largely left Uganda years before the film was produced, though they remained active in neighboring countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African

To Write Love on Her Arms (TWLOHA) is a non-profit organization founded in March 2006 by Jamie Tworkowski. It works to provide hope, community, and direct financial support for treatment to individuals dealing with depression, addiction, self-injury, and thoughts of suicide.

- Mission and Origin

- Origin: Started in Melbourne, Florida, as a MySpace story and T-shirt campaign to help a young woman named Renee Yohe pay for treatment and recovery.
- Mission: To encourage, inform, inspire, and invest directly into mental health care and local resources.
- Leadership: Directed by Lindsay Kolsch.

NEHEMIAH 7

7:1 Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed,

2 I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem, for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many.

3 And I said to them, "Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot. And while they are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their guard posts and some in front of their own homes."

4 The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few, and no houses had been rebuilt.

5 Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up at the first, and I found written in it:

6 These were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried into exile. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his town.

7 They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah.

The number of the men of the people of Israel:

8 the sons of Parosh, 2,172.

9 The sons of Shephatiah, 372.

10 The sons of Arah, 652.

11 The sons of Pahath-moab, namely the sons of Jeshua and Joab, 2,818.

12 The sons of Elam, 1,254.

13 The sons of Zattu, 845.

14 The sons of Zaccai, 760.

15 The sons of Binnui, 648.

16 The sons of Bebai, 628.

17 The sons of Azgad, 2,322.

18 The sons of Adonikam, 667.

19 The sons of Bigvai, 2,067.

20 The sons of Adin, 655.

21 The sons of Ater, namely of Hezekiah, 98.

22 The sons of Hashum, 328.

- 23 The sons of Bezai, 324.
- 24 The sons of Hariph, 112.
- 25 The sons of Gibeon, 95.
- 26 The men of Bethlehem and Netophah, 188.
- 27 The men of Anathoth, 128.
- 28 The men of Beth-azmaveth, 42.
- 29 The men of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, 743.
- 30 The men of Ramah and Geba, 621.
- 31 The men of Michmas, 122.
- 32 The men of Bethel and Ai, 123.
- 33 The men of the other Nebo, 52.
- 34 The sons of the other Elam, 1,254.
- 35 The sons of Harim, 320.
- 36 The sons of Jericho, 345.
- 37 The sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 721.
- 38 The sons of Senaah, 3,930.
- 39 The priests: the sons of Jedaiah, namely the house of Jeshua, 973.
- 40 The sons of Immer, 1,052.
- 41 The sons of Pashhur, 1,247.
- 42 The sons of Harim, 1,017.
- 43 The Levites: the sons of Jeshua, namely of Kadmiel of the sons of Hodevah, 74.
- 44 The singers: the sons of Asaph, 148.
- 45 The gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, 138.
- 46 The temple servants: the sons of Ziha, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth,
- 47 the sons of Keros, the sons of Sia, the sons of Padon,
- 48 the sons of Lebana, the sons of Hagaba, the sons of Shalmai,
- 49 the sons of Hanan, the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar,
- 50 the sons of Reaiah, the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda,
- 51 the sons of Gazzam, the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah,
- 52 the sons of Besai, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephushesim,
- 53 the sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur,
- 54 the sons of Bazlith, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha,
- 55 the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Temah,
- 56 the sons of Neziah, the sons of Hatipha.
- 57 The sons of Solomon's servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Sophereth, the sons of Perida,
- 58 the sons of Jaala, the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel,
- 59 the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil, the sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, the sons of Amon.
- 60 All the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants were 392.
- 61 The following were those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but they could not prove their fathers' houses nor their descent, whether they belonged to Israel:

62 the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, 642.
 63 Also, of the priests: the sons of Hobaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, the sons of Barzillai (who had taken a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by their name).
 64 These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but it was not found there, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean.
 65 The governor told them that they were **not to partake of the most holy food until a priest with Urim and Thummim should arise.**
 66 The whole assembly together was 42,360,
 67 besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337. And they had 245 singers, male and female.
 68 Their horses were 736, their mules 245,
 69 their camels 435, and their donkeys 6,720.
 70 Now some of the heads of fathers' houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 darics of gold, 50 basins, 30 priests' garments and 500 minas of silver.
 71 And some of the heads of fathers' houses gave into the treasury of the work 20,000 darics of gold and 2,200 minas of silver.
 72 And what the rest of the people gave was 20,000 darics of gold, 2,000 minas of silver, and 67 priests' garments.
 73 **So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel, lived in their towns.**
And when the seventh month had come, the people of Israel were in their towns.

CONTEXT

After the work on the wall has been completed and the gates are restored, Nehemiah appoints gatekeepers, singers, and Levites to their tasks. In order to protect the wall and the gates, Nehemiah gives his brother Hanani oversight over them, issuing instructions that the gates are not to be opened until the sun is hot. No business is to be done at any other time except during the middle of the day. What is interesting is that the very Hanani who had brought the sad news to Nehemiah concerning Jerusalem (1:3) is now put in charge of the gates. (Goldberg, Louis. 1995. "[Nehemiah](#)." In Evangelical Commentary on the Bible, 3:317. Baker Reference Library. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.)

7:3 until the sun is hot Normally the gates would be opened at sunrise, but this routine is altered to guard against a surprise attack. (Faithlife Study Bible)

Others who can be trusted are posted as guards along the wall and gates, as well as near their own houses, even though some of these houses have not yet been rebuilt. (Goldberg, Louis. 1995. "[Nehemiah](#)." In Evangelical Commentary on the Bible, 3:317. Baker Reference Library. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.)

In Nehemiah's leadership we see him appointing his brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle. Hanani was the one who gave the bad news in Nehemiah 1:3 and

he took initiative and was concerned. Nehemiah decided he would be a good leader. Hananiah has a great description: “more faithful and God-fearing man than many.” I would also place him in leadership as Nehemiah did.

“The best ability is availability.” (Bill Parcells, Hall of Fame NFL coach) (slide)

“The greatest ability is dependability.” (Bob Jones, Sr., American evangelist) (slide)

Nehemiah called by God to lead His people. Yet Kingship is not his intention. Walls are built in an impossible 52 days.

The census was taken, and re-accounting for the registry in Ezra 2, so Nehemiah could know how many people he had to work with and plan accordingly.

Nehemiah’s purpose in presenting this genealogical information is to find out which families had returned and to encourage the people in his own day to settle in and rebuild Jerusalem. (Faithlife Study Bible)

Some key thoughts regarding the census and registry list:

- Each individual was important (specific names were mentioned).
- What families they came from was important (many family heads are named).
- Their gifts to support the work were important (they are specifically listed towards the end of the chapter).

(David Guzik Study Guide, Nehemiah 7)

Most times we see the importance of the whole rather than just a part. But here in this chapter we see the beauty of individuality.

Yes, it is a historical account of those who returned from Babylon into Jerusalem to fill the city. But each that returned was named in this chapter. They chose to come back, the 2 percent.

“These are the people”: Since only about 2% of the Jews who were carried away into exile by the Babylonians came back, the ones who did have the pioneer spirit are worthy of mention — and they are mentioned twice in God’s eternal word (Here and in Ezra 2).

Maybe we relate with the exiles who are returning to Jerusalem. I don’t what is going to happen in the future. I may be fearful for my life, my family, my future. But I am going to follow the Lord. I will return to the land that was promised to my people. I have an easier,

more comfortable life in Babylon, but I choose the Lord, I choose to follow Him, and return to Jerusalem.

Maybe we relate to Nehemiah. “I have this calling from the Lord, I must find a way. We must rebuild the wall, rebuild the city, and we need people to assist this cause.” Nehemiah led in the midst of exile, opposition.

Nehemiah’s leadership: There is a weight of leadership, there is a weight in following the Lord, and Nehemiah is walking in both. We see the same example in Christ. Christ leading in a way, to do bring God’s kingdom here on earth, in complete obedience to the Father.

MAIN IDEA OF NEHEMIAH 7

The calling of the Lord leads us to pioneering His work, the invitation to worship Him, and following His leading.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Christ was obedient to the Father’s will, in teaching and proclaiming the Gospel, calling His disciples to follow Him and do likewise.

Christ leads us by His Holy Spirit, then calls us to do the will of God.

QUESTIONS

How does Jesus’ humility and obedience to the Father inform us as believers?

In what ways did Jesus lead His disciples?

How does Jesus’ example help us to lead others and follow the Spirit’s leading?

1 Corinthians 12, Spiritual gifts that we can walk in the will of God.

Ephesians 4, the unity and usefulness of the whole body of Christ, submitting to the Lord, with Christ as the head of the body.

NEHEMIAH 8 – Rejoice in The Lord

Word of God proclaimed. Hearts convicted. Joy given. God praised.

QUESTIONS (slide)

What emotions have you felt in reading and understanding the Word of God?

What makes understanding God’s Word meaningful to you?

What is the importance of having support in ministry, helping others understand the Word of God?

NEHEMIAH 8

8:1 And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel.

2 So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month.

3 And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.

4 And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishaël, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand.

5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood.

6 And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places.

8 They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.

10 Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

11 So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved."

12 And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

13 On the second day the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Law.

14 And they found it written in the Law that the Lord had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month,

15 and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem, "Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written."

16 So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim.

17 And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths, for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing.

18 And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.

CONTEXT

4 And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand.

- “At his right hand... and at his left hand”: On the right hand and left hand of Ezra were men who were supporting him in his ministry of teaching God’s Word. The ministry of God’s Word has the greatest effect when people can see men who are in support of it and obedience to it. (David Guzik Study Guide, Nehemiah 8)

Ministry with the support of other people being on both sides as a leader of the ministry or volunteer in the ministry.

Sports: emphasis on team not individual. Basketball with friends. Needing others to create the space and atmosphere of fair, competitive basketball games.

6 And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

- Thanksgiving, prayer, and praise are all good measures of how the Spirit of God and Word of God are working in us. (David Guzik Study Guide, Nehemiah 8)

8 They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

- “Helped the people to understand.”:
 - i. First, because the things of God are spiritually discerned and not intellectually discerned. The Holy Spirit uses gifted teachers to bring spiritual discernment to us,

helping us to understand what God's Word says.

ii. Second, because it was first written in a different language, in a different culture, in a different place, and at a far distant time. Teachers help us understand it all in our own day.

“And there was very great gladness”:

Because of their great obedience to God's Word, there was very great gladness. We often are deceived into thinking the path of gladness is in doing our own thing, but gladness and freedom come only through obedience.

“Day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God”: This revival began by the Spirit of God working through the Word of God it continued that way also. (David Guzik Study Guide, Nehemiah 8)

J. Edwin Orr defined revival as “The Spirit of God working through the Word of God, in the lives of the people of God.” (slide)

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.

10 Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

11 So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.”

- “Do not mourn nor weep”: Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Levites did not want the people to mourn, even though it is a good thing to be sad under the conviction of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. Yet if the sense of conviction is greater than the sense that God is doing a good and holy work, then tears are not good.
- i. Our knowledge of our sin should never be bigger than our knowledge of Jesus as our savior. We are great sinners, but He is a greater savior.
- ii. Therefore, the joy of the Lord is your strength — even when you are being convicted of sin. When we are convicted of sin we know that God is doing a work in us, so we can be glad and take joy.
- c. “Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength”: The people felt sad, because they were aware of their own sin. But they could walk in joy because God

was doing a great work. Our emotions are not beyond our control; we can do God's will even when we don't feel like it.

14 And they found it written in the Law that the Lord had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month,
15 and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem, "Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written."

16 So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim.

17 And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths, for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing.

18 And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.

- **8:17 the people of Israel had not done so** The Festival of Booths had been celebrated on earlier occasions (see 1 Kgs 8:2, 65; Ezra 3:4). This statement likely indicates that no previous festival had conformed as closely to the exact standards of the Law. See note on Ezra 3:4; note on Neh 8:1–18.
- **8:18 a solemn assembly** The Hebrew term used here is common in Old Testament law and is used to emphasize a day on which no work was to be done (Lev 23:36; Num 29:35; Deut 16:8). (Faithlife Study Bible)
- The Feast of Trumpets was to be a joyous occasion (Faithlife Study Bible)

The reality of sacredness doesn't stay in the repentant, solemn, mourning and weeping.

The reality of repentance leads to renewed life which leads to rejoicing.

Understanding the finished work of Christ leads to the repentance, regeneration, and rejoicing in the Lord.

The people of Israel heard God's Word, understood God's Word, and lived out God's Word.
(slide)

In hearing, you can choose to heed or deny the words that were spoken.

In understanding, you can choose to be changed or grow in understanding, or stay unchanged or stay complacent in your understanding.

In living out, you can choose to live wisely or live foolishly.

The people of Israel understood the words of the Lord: they were sorrowful, they were understanding the words of the Lord. Then they were instructed to rejoice.

Most times, we look forward to brokenness in awe of what the Lord has done. He is one that builds up what was torn down. He redeems what was lost.

What a reminder to rejoice, holiness and joy do go together!

“This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” (Psalm 118:24)

Obedience to God leads to jubilation in God. (slide)

MAIN IDEA OF NEHEMIAH 8

Hearing the word of the Lord leads to the repenting and rejoicing in the Lord.

QUESTIONS

What are some roadblocks or challenges to receiving God’s Word, listening to the Lord?

When you understood what Christ did for you, what emotions did you feel? What thoughts went through your mind? (Slide)

CHRIST CONNECTION

Repentance.

The weight of reading and hearing God’s Word doesn’t just change our actions it, it changes our hearts. (slide)

“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

The weight of the Law comes from the weight of our sin. Sin’s weight leads to death. They celebrated but didn’t know that they could rejoice. It’s easy to correct, discipline, pursue greatness. But the work has already been done by the Lord. For us, the work has been done by Christ. We feel the weight of our sin, place our sins on Christ, turn from our sin, be set free from our sin, and rejoice in Jesus Christ! Godly sorrow leads to godly joy.

“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor 15:56-57)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23) Apart from Christ, we can do nothing. John 15:5

CLOSING

The calling of the Lord leads us to pioneering His work, and hearing the word of the Lord leads to the repenting and rejoicing in the Lord.

